

red dress

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by [TheRealFailWhale](#)

Summary

When Lan Wangji accidentally summons the 600-year-dead Yiling Patriarch to the Cloud Recesses library, he realizes something:

He's never actually heard of the Yiling Patriarch?? Like, who even is that?

In which: Lan Wangji resurrects Wei Ying on accident, is baffled and turned on, Wei Ying tries on clothes and almost gives Lan Wangji a heart attack, they get it on, and then live happily ever after.

Notes

Note: In this, WWX's past did not include LWJ, LXC, or LQR. He knew some Lans, just not these ones. The very fuzzy past mentioned here is canon-adjacent, and this is his first time meeting LWJ.

Chapter 1

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Lan Wangji was reading studiously in the Cloud Recesses' library, as he was wont to do, and was very obstinately ignoring the other students in the library, as he was also wont to do. It was going reasonably well: the only person who had dared speak to him in the last hour was a man called Su She, whom Lan Wangji didn't like very much. He generally didn't care enough to dislike people, but Su She was particularly frustrating. He gushed over Lan Wangji far too often, and it made him vaguely uncomfortable. Yes, he was called the Second Jade of Lan, and was considered to be highly attractive (he was antisocial, not ignorant), but that shouldn't have given people the idea that he *wanted* them to flirt with him. The opposite, actually.

He could feel eyes on the back of his head, and held in a sigh. He very much did not want to engage with whomever was staring at him now (probably Su She again) so he gathered his books into his arms and stalked towards the back of the library, intending to find a more private space to work.

Miraculously, no one followed him, and Lan Wangji spent the next few hours reading in peace. He was in the process of reading through a stack of uncataloged items, the likes of which he'd never seen. His task was to determine the contents of the items, the author (some items had no obvious author listed, so he checked for provenance), and then decide on how best to catalog the item in the Cloud Recesses collection. He'd made decent headway thus far, and only had a handful remaining to get through.

He finished the one he was working on (unknown author, ichthyology text) and wrote out his cataloging recommendation, carefully attaching the piece of paper to the fragile bamboo strips and setting it aside. He looked up for the first time in a while and realized that it was getting dark. He would need to leave soon in order to make it to the dinner hall on time. But he only had a few more to read, and surely he could go a little bit longer without eating.

Lan Wangji took hold of the oldest [tome](#) of the pile and pulled it toward him. It was a *xian zhuang* book, and the threads that bound its spine were a dark red. Lan Wangji thumbed them briefly, wondering how it had come to be dyed this color. It was unusual for a binder to take the time to dye the threads for a simple text like this—the outer covering was common enough that it was unlikely to have been intended for a wealthy patron. Actually, the outer covering was ragged, which suggested it was either very old or just very well-used by its previous owner. Lan Wangji set the book down carefully and opened the cover to inspect the colophon, hoping to find any useful provenance there.

All that it contained was a tiny inscription that Lan Wangji had to squint to read.

Property of the Yiling Patriarch

Lan Wangji stared at the page. He'd never heard of a patriarch of Yiling, and that was saying something since he was a history major. The area around Yiling wasn't necessarily his

specialty, but he had done enough reading throughout his life that if there had been such a large figure associated with what was a relatively small town, he'd probably know about it. Which meant that whoever the "Yiling Patriarch" was, they weren't nearly as important as they'd thought they were. Lan Wangji wanted to huff in amusement at the arrogance of the "Patriarch," but instead merely inscribed a note and turned to the next page.

The text was...baffling. To say the least. From what he could read of the absolutely terrible calligraphy, it was some sort of...demonic text? He made out a few different words and phrases, from "blood pool" to "demon subdue palace," as well as talk of horrific surgeries, betrayals, and ghost generals. None of it made any sense whatsoever, and Lan Wangji shook his head. If he had to write down a description of the text (and he did—it was his job), he'd probably go with "diary of a madman."

Lan Wangji began to write down his findings, idly wondering if this was the original diary, or if someone had taken the time to transcribe an additional copy. He continued to flip through the book, checking to see if there were any annotations or scribbles, but it wasn't until he reached the last few pages that he found anything of note.

Scrawled in the top right corner of a page was a very tiny drawing of a...flute? A dizi? Lan Wangji could tell it was supposed to be an instrument, but the brush strokes were really quite terrible. He dutifully wrote down a description and turned the page, and before his eyes had done more than skim the first few columns of text, Lan Wangji was throwing himself away from the table and shielding his eyes.

There was—

What the *hell* —

He carefully sat up and uncovered his eyes, feeling more than a little foolish. He slowly approached the open book, which was sitting there quite innocently, and soon he could make out the small drawing on this page.

It was a...

That is, it looked like...

The Yiling Patriarch had drawn a dick in his diary.

It was a little *too* lifelike for Lan Wangji's comfort. Certainly, he'd seen penises before. Not only did he have one, but he was gay. This was hardly his first time being confronted with a dick, though it was the first time he'd encountered one in a library.

With a heavy sigh, Lan Wangji resumed his seat and began to wonder whether he should record a description of the penis in his notes. For the sake of cataloging, he should. But the idea of writing the word penis in an official library record was a little too weird. He was still considering it when he flipped to the last page and saw that there was a signature next to the final line.

Lan Wangji, glad to be distracted from the penis sketch, tilted his head to try and make out the poor writing.

“Wei... Ying?”

With a sudden rush of wind, Lan Wangji was swept back from the table onto his back. His stack of notes went flying into the air, filling the small corner of the library with a cacophony of wind and sharp, fluttering paper. He was about to begin crawling away when it all stopped as suddenly as it had started.

Lan Wangji was looking around the library, trying to find the source of the abrupt wind, when there was a noise behind him.

It sounded, strangely, like something between a cough and a giggle.

Feeling his skin prickle all over his body, Lan Wangji slowly turned his head to look at the table he'd been blown away from.

He found himself being stared at in return.

“Hey there,” said the owner of the staring eyes. The staring *silver* eyes, that were set into the face of a beautiful man with cut features and remarkably messy hair. “Where the fuck am I?”

Lan Wangji swallowed. He would stay calm, of course. He had absolutely no reason to freak out at the sudden and inexplicable appearance of a strange man in the Cloud Recesses library, whose arrival had been heralded by a minor tornado.

“Cloud Recesses,” Lan Wangji managed to whisper eventually, and was baffled when the stranger's face twisted in disgusted recognition.

“Ugh, seriously?” The stranger ran a thin-fingered hand through his hair, the sleeve of his... robes? falling gracefully aside and revealing pale skin. “Damn, I can't believe I got brought back here. Are you a Lan?” The man addressed him sharply, startling Lan Wangji into feeling a bit defensive.

“Yes,” he said firmly, and finally dragged himself to a standing position. His shoulders hurt a little from slamming into the floor, but that was the least of his concerns right now. “Who are you?”

The stranger raised a delicate eyebrow before his red mouth curled into a smile.

“Weren't you just reading my diary?” He said with a faint tease in his voice. “I'm Wei Ying. Wei Wuxian.” His smile turned biting, his teeth baring as he stared at Lan Wangji in what he probably thought was a threatening manner. “The Yiling Patriarch. You've probably heard of me.”

Lan Wangji, who had been confronted with this man's dick sketch not five minutes ago, finally let out the snort he'd been holding in since he first began leafing through the diary. The stranger—the Patriarch's—Wei Ying's eyes widened nearly imperceptibly at Lan Wangji's response.

“Actually, I had never heard of you until I’d opened that book.”

Wei Ying’s jaw dropped and he finally scrambled off the table, unfolding his body and shocking Lan Wangji a little bit when he realized the other man was nearly as tall as himself. And he was quite tall. Wei Ying’s robes were nice looking, or, well, they probably had been at one point. Lan Wangji could tell that the fabric was of good quality, with delicate embroidery around the sleeves and the swirling hems. Unfortunately, it currently looked like Wei Ying had been dust bathing, as his clothing was covered in dust and grime.

None of this stopped him from getting right in Lan Wangji’s face, glaring up at him with what was not a very intimidating glare.

“Listen here, you tall Lan—” Wei Ying began, his finger so close to Lan Wangji that he could’ve bitten it.

“Lan Wangji,” he interrupted, and wanted to smirk when the other man’s expression froze.

“Lan what?” He seemed confused, as though he hadn’t expected to hear a name, possibly ever.

“Lan Zhan, courtesy name Wangji,” he finished, which only seemed to confuse Wei Ying more.

After a moment of silence, he said suspiciously, “Wei Ying. Courtesy name Wuxian. The Yiling—”

“Patriarch, yes, I understand.”

Wei Ying’s eyes narrowed, as though he could hear the sarcasm that Lan Wangji was pretty sure had only been in his mind, as opposed to his actual voice.

“Listen here, Lan Zhan,” Wei Ying said, and Lan Wangji felt a frisson of annoyance at the casual use of his name. Wei Ying clearly noticed, because his smirk returned. “I don’t know what you think you can get out of me, but I’m not telling a *Lan* anything.”

Lan Wangji raised an eyebrow, staring down into Wei Ying’s eyes. This close, he could smell the other man, who mostly smelled musky, and oddly like parchment.

“Where exactly do you think you are?” he asked, and Wei Ying huffed before taking a step back and crossing his arms.

“You already told me, I’m in Cloud Recesses.”

Lan Wangji considered this for a moment, taking in Wei Ying’s traditional robes and strong distaste for the Lan family.

“Allow me to rephrase, then. *When* do you think you are?”

Wei Ying blinked at him for a few seconds and then burst into laughter.

“Oh my god, no way!” Wei Ying said through fits of giggles. “You are *not* trying to tell me that I’ve time traveled, you are *not* !”

Without a word, Lan Wangji began cleaning up his notes. They had gone all over the small back room, so it took him a few moments to find them all, which in turn gave Wei Ying time to calm down from his laughter. By the time Lan Wangji had tidied his materials and turned back to the man, he was wiping tears from his eyes.

“I had no idea you Lans had senses of humor,” Wei Ying sighed, with an almost fond tone. “You certainly didn’t the last time I was here.”

Still not saying anything, Lan Wangji indicated that Wei Ying should follow him out of the library. Chortling to himself, Wei Ying fell into step at Lan Wangji’s side. They passed through the archival area of the library, with its traditional shelves and older materials, into the more modern space, with its bright white wood, gleaming floors, and soft-yellow lights. It was empty, seeing as how the library had probably closed almost half an hour ago, and the clicking of Lan Wangji’s oxfords echoed throughout the space.

The sound of Wei Ying’s footsteps halted abruptly behind him, and when Lan Wangji turned to look at him, he found the man staring around in awed befuddlement.

“Where the fuck are we?” he whispered, taking a few tentative steps toward the main circulation desk. There were two computers behind it, and Wei Ying was looking at them with wide eyes.

“Cloud Recesses,” Lan Wangji said simply, which didn’t explain anything. Wei Ying glared at him, but the effect was dampened by the beginnings of unease on his face. “Come.”

Lan Wangji turned and resumed his walk toward the front doors. It was perhaps seven in the evening, and when he opened the door to hold it for Wei Ying, the cool air of the autumn evening swept in, bringing with it the scent of decaying leaves. Wei Ying stepped past him and Lan Wangji locked the doors behind them as he followed the man to the edge of the terrace that fronted the library.

From here, the rest of Cloud Recesses unfolded beneath them. It had changed drastically over the years—Lan Wangji had seen photographs. The library hadn’t always been here, at the back of Cloud Recesses, up a hill, but they’d relocated it after a fire a few hundred years ago. Spreading out from the terrace were the buildings that made up Cloud Recesses, a private university: dorms, various classroom buildings, the admin building. There was on campus housing as well, and even a park. In the distance, on the horizon, were the lights of Caiyi, which wasn’t a large city, necessarily, but it had enough high rises to stand out.

Lan Wangji suspected that none of it was what Wei Ying had expected.

“Lan Zhan,” Wei Ying said after staring around for a few minutes. He sounded hoarse, as though reality were finally setting in. “What’s going on?”

“I think we should speak to my uncle,” Lan Wangji said softly. For all that he’d initially been alarmed by Wei Ying, he couldn’t help but feel some pity for the man now. He was out of his

time, sprung from an ancient book presumably because Lan Wangji had said his name for the first time in possibly hundreds of years.

“Uncle...” Wei Ying trailed off. “Lan Zhan. I have a very serious question for you.”

Lan Wangji glanced over and found Wei Ying staring at him with a fierce desperation.

“Obviously, things have changed a shit ton since I was here before,” Wei Ying said, taking a step closer to Lan Wangji. “But there’s one thing that matters most right now, and I’m really hoping it changed along with the rest of this.” Wei Ying flapped a hand at Cloud Recesses.

“What is it, Wei Ying?” Lan Wangji asked. Perhaps he’d known someone here before, and wanted to know what had happened to them. If so, Lan Wangji, as the de facto historian for Cloud Recesses, was certainly the best person to—

“Is alcohol still not allowed in Cloud Recesses?”

Lan Wangji stared.

“You. Are asking about...alcohol?”

Wei Ying closed the distance between them and put his hands on Lan Wangji’s shoulders. His face was deadly serious. “Lan Zhan. Lan Wangji. Yes.”

Lan Wangji wanted to cradle his head in his hands. Wei Ying, he suspected, would not adapt well to Cloud Recesses.

Twenty minutes later, Lan Wangji was knocking on his uncle’s door. He had Wei Ying at his side and Wei Ying’s diary under his arm. He’d offered it to Wei Ying, but the man had refused to take it.

“Pretty sure I’ve been trapped in there for a while, I don’t want to touch it, preferably ever again,” he’d said.

It took his uncle a few minutes to answer the door, and when he did, his brow quickly furrowed.

“Wangji,” his uncle grunted. “It is growing late. Shouldn’t you be studying?”

“Uncle, we have a problem,” Lan Wangji said. He tipped his head toward Wei Ying, whom his uncle appeared to just now notice. His eyes narrowed as he took in the man’s wild hair, shoddy robes, and rather morose face.

“Who is this?” barked Lan Qiren, and Wei Ying jumped beside him, actually trying to shuffle closer to Lan Wangji.

“The problem,” Lan Wangji said, and then winced at his own words. “I apologize, Wei Ying, I did not mean—”

But Wei Ying waved away his words. “No problem, Lan Zhan, I get it.”

Lan Qiren’s face was turning dark red when Lan Wangji looked at him again. Presumably he was disturbed by this stranger using his name so familiarly.

“Inside, please, Uncle,” Lan Wangji said, cutting off whatever Lan Qiren had been about to say. The man appeared to chew his tongue for a moment and then nodded sharply, turning on his heel and marching into his home.

“This way, Wei Ying,” Lan Wangji entreated, and after a hesitant look at Lan Qiren’s retreating back, Wei Ying stepped over his uncle’s threshold.

They followed Lan Qiren into the sitting room, where his uncle was now seated in his armchair, sipping almost pointedly from his cup of tea.

“What is going on, Wangji?” Lan Qiren asked when he and Wei Ying were settled on the couch facing his uncle.

He held up the diary. “I was preparing to catalog this book. I had reached the end and found a signature, which was somewhat difficult to read.” He frowned briefly at Wei Ying who managed to look vaguely sheepish. “In making it out, I said the name aloud. It was then that Wei Ying, courtesy name Wuxian, came out of nowhere.”

“You forgot the most important one, Lan Zhan!” Wei Ying complained, sitting up a little straighter and poking him in the shoulder. “Wei Ying, courtesy Wuxian, title Yiling Patriarch!”

There was a clattering sound from his uncle, and he and Wei Ying looked over in surprise, finding Lan Qiren dabbing at a damp spot on his night robe. He set aside his tea cup and turned his eyes onto Wei Ying.

“You claim to be the Yiling Patriarch?” Lan Qiren asked suspiciously, and Wei Ying scoffed.

“I don’t *claim* anything,” he said loftily. “I *am* the Yiling Patriarch.”

“Who is the Yiling Patriarch?” Lan Wangji asked his uncle, but Wei Ying replied first.

“Me, Lan Zhan! Come on, keep up!”

For a moment, Lan Wangji was tempted to cover Wei Ying’s mouth with his hand, before deciding that would be highly inappropriate. Instead, he continued to look at his uncle, waiting.

“The Yiling Patriarch,” Lan Qiren sighed. “Was a demonic cultivator some six hundred years ago.”

Silence fell over his uncle’s living room.

“Six hundred years?” Wei Ying whispered. All jocularity had vanished, leaving behind a remarkably defeated looking man. Lan Wangji’s hand twitched toward Wei Ying against his

will, but he held it back.

“Mmn,” Lan Qiren affirmed, with a steely gaze. “According to our records, he was killed during the Sunshot Campaign.”

“I’m dead?” Wei Ying asked, before starting to touch his hands to his chest.

“Clearly not,” Lan Qiren harrumphed. “You, or one of your...subordinates, must have sealed your soul into that diary,” he nodded at the book on Lan Wangji’s lap, “and it was my nephew’s misfortune that it fell to him to catalog it, thereby releasing you with your name.”

“What was the Sunshot Campaign?” Lan Wangji asked, and he caught Wei Ying’s grimace out of the corner of his eye.

Lan Qiren cleared his throat. “It was a bloodbath. The Chief Cultivator was attempting to subjugate many other sects, and it was only due to the Yiling Patriarch’s actions that he was defeated. Those actions,” Lan Qiren went on, and Wei Ying’s shoulders appeared to shrink in on themselves, “involved demonic energy, the manipulation of spirits, the *enslavement* of the dead—”

Wei Ying’s head finally snapped up, expression dangerous. “Hey, I didn’t enslave anybody,” he insisted. “Those people wanted vengeance and I helped them get it.”

Lan Qiren snorted. “Call it what you will, the Yiling Patriarch summoned thousands of undead to the battlefield and they massacred the Chief Cultivator’s army. It would have been finished then, except the Yiling Patriarch lost control, and the undead turned on the rest of the cultivators, and ultimately himself.”

“Fuck,” Wei Ying muttered. Lan Wangji looked at him as he slumped back against the sofa. “I didn’t know about that.”

“What is the last thing you remember?” Lan Wangji asked, ignoring his uncle for the moment.

Wei Ying’s eyes flicked toward Lan Qiren before returning to his knees. “I...remember the battle. I remember it working on the Wen forces, but...I don’t remember anything after that.”

Wei Ying’s voice was quiet, and he looked practically despondent. Lan Wangji had known the man for all of half an hour, and yet seeing him like this felt...wrong.

“Uncle,” Lan Wangji said at last, turning his gaze to the older man. “It is growing late. Perhaps I should take Wei Ying to rest.”

Lan Qiren’s eyes narrowed. “He is a war criminal, Wangji. He should be locked away.”

“I will watch him,” Lan Wangji promised. It was true. He did plan to keep an eye on Wei Ying.

Wei Ying twitched next to him but didn’t object. Lan Wangji rose to his feet and bowed to his uncle. “I will return in the morning, Uncle.”

Lan Qiren nodded at him, eyes fixed on Wei Ying. "See that you both do."

Lan Wangji led Wei Ying through the darkening Cloud Recesses. They passed a few students that had yet to return to their dorms before curfew, and many of them gave Lan Wangji odd looks. He was not usually one to wander around with anyone at his side, much less a stranger with weird clothes. Lan Wangji could acknowledge that they made an incongruous pair: Wei Ying with his dirty black and red robes, messy hair; Lan Wangji in his crisp white shirt and light linen pants. They must have looked like complete opposites, and the judgmental looks from other students made Lan Wangji want to draw Wei Ying under his arm and hide the man from the prying eyes.

He held back that urge all the way to his private residence, one of the on-campus houses that were always reserved for members of the Lan family. As founders of the Cloud Recesses, the Lan family was granted certain privileges, and Lan Wangji's favorite was not having to share his living space with someone else.

And yet, here he was now, unlocking the door and ushering Wei Ying into his rooms.

He turned on the overhead lights and deposited Wei Ying in a soft blue armchair to the right of his front door. The man still looked shaken, clearly not yet over the news of his own death.

"Would you like to shower?" Lan Wangji asked, hovering awkwardly in front of Wei Ying, who finally brought his gaze out of the distance and back onto Lan Wangji.

"Would I like to what?" Wei Ying stared blankly at him, and it took Lan Wangji a few moments to realize that "showers" probably weren't a thing back when Wei Ying had lived.

"Ah, bathe. Would you like to bathe?" he amended, and some of the confusion cleared from Wei Ying's face.

"I guess a bath would be nice," he said slowly, except he sank further into the armchair and made no move to get up. "I don't suppose gege would draw one for me?"

Lan Wangji's mouth thinned as he watched Wei Ying snuggle into the chair and stare up at him with an expression that gradually grew teasing.

"Come on, Lan Zhan," Wei Ying began to wheedle. He draped his arms over the chair and let his legs fall open, and Lan Wangji abruptly very much didn't appreciate what the man was doing. "I was dead up until like, an hour ago! I don't know how your fancy shit works."

"I would be glad to teach you," Lan Wangji said through gritted teeth. And to think, he'd been feeling *sorry* for Wei Ying.

Wei Ying waved dismissively and tilted his head back onto the headrest, baring his pointed throat at Lan Wangji, who swallowed reflexively.

"Don't be silly, Lan Zhan, I'm much too tired to learn anything right now."

Lan Wangji closed his eyes and took several deep breaths. He forced himself to remember that, however annoying Wei Ying was promising to be, he really was new to all this. It would be only kind to allow him a little leeway. For the night.

“Fine,” Lan Wangji finally retorted, and he turned on his heel and stalked toward his bathroom.

Honestly, what should he have expected from a man who drew a life-like dick in his own diary? He was clearly shameless, and would probably take full advantage of Lan Wangji if he was given even the slightest millimeter. He resolved, therefore, to be gracious tonight, but in the morning, Lan Wangji would no longer put up with such lackadaisical behavior from the man.

He drew the bath, and after some consideration he added scented bath oil to the water. It was likely that Wei Ying would be spending most of his time with Lan Wangji for the foreseeable future, and he would much prefer that the man smell...not musky. He laid out a clean towel and wash rag, lined up the shampoo, conditioner, body soap, and even deigned to lay out his sugar scrub, just in case the man was feeling luxurious.

He was just preparing to head to the living room to tell Wei Ying his bath was ready, like the fool that he was, when the man’s voice spoke from the doorway.

“Wow, it is *really* clean in here.”

Lan Wangji turned and saw that Wei Ying was looking around his white bathroom (white floor tiles, white marble countertop, white porcelain shower, white *everything*) with wide eyes. When they finally landed on the bathtub, his expression grew ecstatic.

“Oh, damn, Lan Zhan, that bath looks amazing!” Lan Wangji did his best to step aside as Wei Ying barreled into the (not tiny, but not exactly *large*) bathroom, brushing a little too closely past Lan Wangji. Wei Ying leaned over the water and inhaled deeply, letting it out in a very satisfied sigh. “Shit, that smells awesome. This is your scent, right?”

Lan Wangji jolted uncomfortably as Wei Ying looked at him with curiosity, and he decided it would be best to not answer that question.

He pointed to the towel and washcloth. “Those are for you. The shampoo and things are on the edge of the tub. Let me know if you need anything.” Please let him not need anything.

Perhaps predictably, Wei Ying’s eyes sparkled. “Hmm, I guess I don’t *need* anything right now. This is great, Lan Zhan, thank you.” With that, Wei Ying began to pull off his robes with alarming speed, prompting Lan Wangji to turn on his heel and stalk out the door, shutting it firmly behind him along with Wei Ying’s bright laughter.

Lan Wangji took several deep breaths out in the hallway, willing himself to calm down. It was not very surprising that Wei Ying was doing more to draw him in than anyone ever had. Lan Wangji was, apparently, a sucker for a laughing smile and bright eyes, especially when the person behind those eyes was a mystery.

He shook his head and walked into his bedroom, slowly changing out of his day clothes and into pajamas, doing his best to ignore the sounds of splashing that were emanating from his bathroom.

It also occurred to him that Wei Ying was perhaps hungry, or at least would become so soon, given that he hadn't eaten in several hundred years. Slippers on, he headed to his kitchen and looked through the fridge for something he could quickly prepare for a man who was likely very unused to modern food. He wound up selecting a few different fruits and vegetables and put them on a plate, along with a bit of bread. It wasn't much, but it was also getting very close to his bedtime, and he did not want to stay up cooking too late. Tomorrow he would go to the grocery store and procure things that Wei Ying would like.

Lan Wangji frowned to himself as he carried the plate of food into the living room. He could not afford to become...attached to Wei Ying. He was a man out of time, and likely wouldn't stay in Cloud Recesses for very long. Surely he would want to...do something. Somewhere. Probably Yiling.

The bathroom door opened and Lan Wangji turned toward it, waiting to show the food to Wei Ying.

Unfortunately, he was immediately confronted with the fact that, while he had prepared a nice bath for Wei Ying, he had failed to consider what the man would wear *after his bath*.

Currently, Wei Ying was wearing a towel, and nothing else.

Feeling his face turn bright red with embarrassment, Lan Wangji spun around and glared uncomfortably at the wall as Wei Ying laughed behind him.

"Ah, Lan Zhan! I'm sorry, I didn't mean to confront you with my nakedness, I just didn't want to put on my dirty robes now that I'm all clean."

Logical, of course, but it did nothing to allay Lan Wangji's very sudden awkwardness.

"I apologize," he managed to eke out. "I have prepared some food for you. I will fetch you clothes while you eat."

"Okay!" Wei Ying said brightly, and then he was coming back into Lan Wangji's field of vision. He caught sight of sharp shoulder blades and a scarred chest before he could turn around and flee to his bedroom.

Breathing a little harder than was strictly appropriate, Lan Wangji took his time finding clothes for Wei Ying. He finally found an older, but still soft, pair of sweatpants and a long sleeve shirt that he hadn't worn in a few months. He returned to the living room with his jaw clenched. To hand the clothes to Wei Ying, he'd have to look at him.

He could do this.

Wei Ying smiled at him through a mouthful of carrot as he entered the living room. The man held out his hand and Lan Wangji carefully passed over his clothes.

Wei Ying's hair was wet and tangled, like he hadn't bothered to brush it after getting out of the bath. His skin was a few shades darker than the inside of an almond, and it made the scars on his chest stand out in painful relief. There was a scar on his chest that was far too precise to be the result of anything but a brand, which made Lan Wangji's stomach twist. Down the center of Wei Ying's abdomen was a thick scar, as though he'd had surgery at some point in his life. Lan Wangji could also see the tips of scars beginning at the tops of his shoulders and wrapping down, like he'd been...whipped.

Lan Wangji swallowed and looked away. He couldn't imagine how someone could live through all that pain, but then again, Wei Ying hadn't exactly lived through it in the end.

There was a quiet moment before Wei Ying spoke in a soft voice, "The scars are a lot, huh?"

Lan Wangji glanced at him and found that Wei Ying was staring at him with sad eyes. He pointed at the brand on his chest.

"This was from the girlfriend of a guy called Wen Chao. Really awful piece of shit, she was." His fingers tapped lightly at his mottled skin, tracing over one of the pointed ends, before moving up to the ones on his shoulders. "These are from the lady who...well, she didn't help raise me, exactly. But she was around for a lot of my childhood. Not that she wanted to be." There was an empty smile on his lips as Wei Ying's fingers trailed down to his stomach. "This was from a procedure, actually. Voluntary, too. Do you guys still have golden cores?" When Lan Wangji shook his head, Wei Ying sighed. "Well, neither did I, once my friend cut it out of me."

Lan Wangji couldn't stop himself from gasping, but Wei Ying shook his head.

"I asked her to. My...well, my sort-of brother needed one. And I didn't. Not really." Wei Ying took a deep breath, looking up at Lan Wangji again. "It hurt like fuck. Wouldn't recommend trying it."

Lan Wangji, despite having been highly annoyed by Wei Ying not that long ago, was nearly consumed with the desire to gather the man into his arms and comfort him. None of these hurts were new to him, not at all, but that didn't mean they hurt any less than when they'd first happened.

Wei Ying shook his head a little and then tried to smile again. "Anyway. Those are my scars. Got any to share, Lan Zhan?" He began to pull on the shirt, which was much too large for him. The neck hung low and left his collar bones on display.

"Nothing like yours," Lan Wangji replied. "Would you like tea?"

Wei Ying smiled. "Sure, Lan Zhan. Tea would be great."

Ultimately, Lan Wangji stayed up long enough past 9 that he was practically falling asleep in the living room. He'd made Wei Ying tea, and then found himself sitting on the couch and listening while Wei Ying regaled him with the various ways that, so far, things were different from when he'd lived.

Fruit tasted different (probably due to different agriculture practices). Tea tasted different (possibly the result of water purification systems). Clothes felt different (advances in textile manufacturing). He also claimed that the air felt different, and then Lan Wangji tried to explain global warming and gas emissions, but that was too complicated as Wei Ying had no idea what a car was.

Overall, everything was different except the Lan rules, which Wei Ying asked many questions about. He claimed to have once visited the Cloud Recesses for a discussion conference, and had only stayed for a few days before getting kicked out. Lan Wangji was not surprised to hear this.

It wasn't until Lan Wangji failed to hide a yawn that Wei Ying stopped talking.

"Oh my god, Lan Zhan!" the man gasped, pointing at him. "I totally forgot! You Lans used to go to bed weirdly early, is that still a thing? Is it way past your bedtime?"

Feeling a little disgruntled, Lan Wangji nodded curtly, and Wei Ying sprang up. He'd eventually put on the sweatpants Lan Wangji had provided, and had to tighten the waist string rather a lot (he really was much leaner than Lan Wangji)(that was not distracting at all).

"We should go to bed then," Wei Ying said and headed toward the hallway. "Where's the bedroom?"

Alarmed, Lan Wangji stood up and hurried after the man as he poked his head in the various doorways along Lan Wangji's hall.

"Wei Ying, what are you doing?"

"I'm looking for the bedroom, I just said that," Wei Ying replied, and then he stepped into Lan Wangji's room without a second thought. "Found it! Do you have shorts I could sleep in?"

Lan Wangji did not sigh out loud, but he definitely sighed deeply on the inside. Wei Ying wanted his bed. That was...fine. Annoying, mostly, but again, the man was only just recently alive again.

He dug around in his dresser for a moment before pulling out a pair of running shorts that he hadn't worn in a while. He handed them over to Wei Ying and then went to collect an extra blanket and pillow from his hall closet.

Once he'd made up the couch, he stared at it for a while. He really was too tall to fit comfortably on the couch, but Wei Ying was a guest. It would be rude to tell him to sleep on the couch. Trying not to slouch his shoulders too much, Lan Wangji returned to the bedroom and found Wei Ying already snuggled under the covers. Silver eyes looked up at him and crinkled into a smile.

"Ready for bed, Lan Zhan?" Wei Ying asked, and Lan Wangji tried not to feel too peeved about the man rubbing it in.

“Yes,” he replied shortly. “Good night, Wei Ying. I will see you in the morning.”

He made to turn back to the living room but Wei Ying immediately said, “Wait, what? Where are you going?”

Lan Wangji turned slowly around again and found Wei Ying looking at him in confusion.

“To the couch,” Lan Wangji explained cautiously.

Wei Ying blinked.

“But aren’t you sleeping here?”

A pause.

“With... Wei Ying?”

“Well yeah,” said the man, and he propped himself up on his elbows as he looked at Lan Wangji. “It’d be pretty shitty of me to just prance in, eat your food, wear your pajamas, and then steal your bed. I figured we’d share.”

Lan Wangji was fine. He was *fine*. He was not having heart palpitations over the idea of sharing a bed with Wei Ying. *He was not*.

“Unnecessary,” he finally managed to croak out, but Wei Ying snorted and patted the empty side of the bed. Coincidentally, perhaps, Lan Wangji’s usual side.

“Just get over here and lay down, gege, I know you’re tired.”

“Shameless,” came out of his mouth before he could think about it, but his feet were already carrying him toward his bed. He hesitated as he looked down at Wei Ying, who was scooting down beneath the blankets again.

Slowly, Lan Wangji lifted the blankets and climbed into bed. The sheets were mostly cool, but towards the middle they were warm, no doubt because of the proximity to Wei Ying.

Don’t think about it.

“Lan Zhan, do you snore?” Wei Ying asked. He was lying on his side with his back to Lan Wangji, which was probably for the best, all things considered. The last thing he needed right now was to be perceived.

“I don’t know,” Lan Wangji replied. He laid himself down on his back, eyes staring fixedly at the ceiling. His hands were folded neatly over his chest, where they would hopefully stay throughout the night. He’d never shared a bed with someone before, and frankly had no idea what he was like while he slept. Hopefully, he wasn’t a terrible bedmate.

He heard Wei Ying yawn. “Guess I’ll have to let you know in the morning, then. Sleep tight, Lan Zhan.”

“Mn.”

Lan Wangji stared at the ceiling for another fifteen minutes before routine sucked him down to sleep.

Lan Wangji was very, *very* warm.

Usually when he woke up at 5 in the morning, he was still a little cool, thanks to his very fancy bamboo sheets. But today, although he could tell that it was indeed 5 in the morning, he was practically sweating.

It took him a few moments to blink the sleep out of his eyes, and as he did so he became aware that the source of the warmth was not himself, but something curled up at his side.

He looked down.

Wei Ying was beside him, tucked into a fetal position, his warm breath gusting over Lan Wangji's shoulder. He also had Lan Wangji's left arm clutched in his hands, and the tips of Lan Wangji's fingers were brushing against bare skin. Wei Ying's legs.

He flexed his hand, but Wei Ying didn't react. Lan Wangji can't really see his face, tucked away as it is, and it's partially covered by his long black hair. It's extremely tangled now, and Lan Wangji should probably have made him brush his hair before bed last night. He'd just been too flustered by Wei Ying's appropriation of his bed, and the subsequent way he'd climbed into bed with him.

Lan Wangji sighed and wondered if he should try and withdraw his arm. He didn't want Wei Ying to wake up (he wasn't sure he was ready to be teased before dawn), but he also really needed the bathroom.

Slowly, he attempted to draw his hand away from Wei Ying, who promptly began to whimper.

He stopped at once, surprised at the immediate reaction. Based on Wei Ying's breathing, the man was still asleep, but apparently he was well aware that Lan Wangji was attempting to withdraw. He tried again. Maybe he just needed to do it slowly enough so—nope, Wei Ying started to mumble in his sleep now.

“Qing-jie, no...”

Lan Wangji cannot remember if Wei Ying had told him about a sister last night. He remembers a “sort-of brother” but no other siblings. He tried to move one more time, intending this to be the last, and it was then that Wei Ying began to cry.

Lan Wangji stared at him in growing alarm as tears gradually poured out of Wei Ying's closed eyes, small whimpers escaping his lips as he clutched tighter at Lan Wangji's arm. It had been many, many years since Lan Wangji had a bad dream, but he remembered how

grateful he was any time Xichen woke him up, so, Lan Wangji laid a gentle hand on Wei Ying's shoulders and attempted to shake him awake.

"Wei Ying," he said quietly, but the man only continued to cry. He tried a little more loudly, "Wei Ying," and shook his shoulder a little more firmly, but there was no answer. He increased the pressure of his hand and intoned, "Wei Ying, wake up."

It took a few more tries for Wei Ying to rouse, and he did so abruptly, eyes flashing open as he looked around wildly. His breathing was ragged as he finally recognized Lan Wangji, and after another few moments of panic, he huffed a breath and slumped back into his fetal position.

"Lan Zhan," he murmured. "Sorry. I forgot that I used to have bad dreams."

Lan Wangji didn't know what to say, so he stayed quiet, his hand still resting on Wei Ying's shoulder. Several quiet breaths passed, and then Wei Ying looked at him again. He seemed to realize how close they were, and in a smooth motion, he let go of Lan Wangji's arm and rolled away.

"Ah, sorry about that too," Wei Ying muttered, and then he got out of bed and disappeared into the hallway, presumably to use the bathroom.

Lan Wangji is left lying in his bed, feeling oddly bereft, given that he usually wakes up alone. He'd shown Wei Ying last night how the toilet works, and a few minutes later, he returned to stand in the bedroom doorway.

Wei Ying stared at the ground, bare legs revealing more scars that Lan Wangji hadn't seen yesterday. He's restlessly twisting his fingers together, like he's...nervous.

"Wei Ying?" Lan Wangji asked, pushing aside the blankets and rising to his feet.

Wei Ying glanced up at him and offered an awkward smile. "Sorry for sleeping all over you, Lan Zhan. And for nightmaring at you."

"It is alright," he said cautiously, moving to stand in front of the other man. They really aren't that far apart, height-wise, but the way Wei Ying stands makes him seem much shorter than he really is. Lan Wangji wondered if it was on purpose. "Would you like breakfast?"

Wei Ying looked up at him again, and this time his smile was a little calmer. He seemed relieved that Lan Wangji was not attempting to pry into his nightmares, and Lan Wangji decided not to bring them up until Wei Ying seemed more settled.

By the time Lan Wangji finished preparing congee, his own usual breakfast, Wei Ying was a little calmer. Calm enough to complain about the "lack of flavor" in Lan Wangji's cooking anyway.

"I mean, would it kill you to use some chili oil? Pepper flakes? *Pepper* ? There are so many spices, Lan Zhan, they could really improve...everything!"

Lan Wangji resolved to find any and all of the flavorings that Wei Ying just mentioned, though he was not sure how much he'd be cooking for the man after today. It was likely that his uncle would want to keep Wei Ying separate from the rest of Cloud Recesses, given his often indefatigable attention to rules.

"So what's the plan for today?" asked Wei Ying after he'd scraped every last bit of food out of his bowl. "A grand tour? Gonna take me shopping?"

Lan Wangji carefully does not prod at the small part of him that responds excitedly to the idea of buying clothes for Wei Ying, instead taking the man's empty bowl and beginning to wash the morning's dishes.

"First, we must meet with Uncle," he explained, the familiar motions of dish-scrubbing distracting him very effectively. "He will likely have called for my brother to join us as well."

Wei Ying perked up, tossing his tangled hair over his shoulder. "You have a brother? Lan Zhan, why didn't you tell me?"

He raised an eyebrow. "We met yesterday, Wei Ying. I did not have time to tell you my life story."

Wei Ying laughed. "Did you just joke with me, Lan Zhan?"

Lan Wangji didn't reply, merely laid the remaining dishes in the drain board and dried his hands on a towel. "Would you like to bathe again this morning, or would you prefer to dress and head to my uncle's?"

"Is he even awake?" Wei Ying screwed up his face and craned his neck to look out the kitchen window over Lan Wangji's shoulder. "The sun's barely up."

"The Lan sect stipulates that members should rise at 5am."

Wei Ying groaned.

"Damn, I forgot about that. The weird bedtime *and* the early rising. You Lans are raised to be old people!"

"The fact remains, my uncle will be awake. What would you like to do?"

"Explore Cloud Recesses," Wei Ying replied immediately and Lan Wangji shook his head, which made the other man pout at him. "Fine. I'll just dress and we can go see your grumpy uncle."

Lan Wangji showed Wei Ying to his closet, invited him to wear whatever he liked, and then retreated to his bathroom. He stared into the mirror for a while, taking in his smooth dark hair, sharp cheekbones, and blank expression. Except, it wasn't quite as blank as usual. There was the faintest curl to his lips that suggested...he was smiling?

Wei Ying was a bad influence.

(He wasn't sure he minded.)

When he left the bathroom sometime later, showered and brushed, he found that Wei Ying had chosen to go through the entirety of his wardrobe. There were shirts and pants all over his bed, as though Wei Ying couldn't make a decision without looking at each item, and then just hadn't put them back. Lan Wangji sighed heavily and Wei Ying turned to face him, two nearly identical white button-ups in each hand.

"Lan Zhan!" Wei Ying said despairingly, brandishing the shirts at him. "Do you only wear white?! Are you just perpetually in mourning?!"

"I like white," Lan Wangji protested lightly. He took the shirts from Wei Ying and hung them back in the closet. He then retrieved an older box that was tucked into one of the corners, and then laid it on the bed. "These are clothes my brother gifted me that are not exactly...my style. Perhaps they will be more to your liking."

Wei Ying immediately dug into the box and started pulling out t-shirts in darker shades of blue. He even found a charcoal gray t-shirt that seemed to really appeal to him, and he held it up to his chest to check the size. "This will work, I think. Do you have any pants that aren't tan?"

"In the box."

He selected his own clothes for the day as Wei Ying mumbled to himself, still poking through the box of Xichen's gifts. He retreated to the bathroom to change (he did not need Wei Ying to pass judgment on his physique)(though he couldn't imagine the man would be anything less than complimentary) and by the time he'd returned, safely clothed in ankle-length linen trousers and a loose necked, long sleeved white linen shirt, Wei Ying had also dressed.

He looked...

He would definitely want to shop in the kinds of stores that Lan Wangji avoided.

Wei Ying had located a pair of very old dark blue jeans. Lan Wangji didn't remember ever buying or receiving them, but he could tell they were old because they were *very* tight on Wei Ying. The jeans clung to his legs like spiderwebs, and Lan Wangji had to make a concerted effort not to stare at his crotch. The gray shirt he'd found was big on him, as it had been a gift from Xichen from back when Lan Wangji had been into weight-lifting. The sleeves of the shirt came down nearly to his elbows, and he'd tucked the billowy hem into the jeans. The shirt itself had a very silly joke on it, selected by Xichen because Lan Wangji had been taking a class on Roman history at the time.

"Lan Zhan?" Wei Ying asked, looking down at the shirt on his chest. He plucked it with two fingers and held it away from his torso. "What's a...Julius...Caesar salad?"

At the time, Lan Wangji had found it to be an incredibly funny joke, and when Xichen had given him the t-shirt, with its cartoon salad with many knives sticking into it, he'd actually let out a laugh. He'd never worn it though, because he hadn't wanted anyone to ask him about it. He hated inviting conversation.

“It is a history joke,” Lan Wangji said simply. “It requires context. I can explain it to you later. Are you ready to go?”

“First, how do I look in your fancy new-age clothes?” Wei Ying spun around, giving Lan Wangji the opportunity to *not* ogle his ass.

Lan Wangji did not take that opportunity. He ogled Wei Ying’s ass.

Just a little.

“Those are not ‘fancy’ clothes,” Lan Wangji said, rather than saying any of the various things he was thinking about Wei Ying’s ass. “But you look...” *Think of something. Something complimentary but vague. You can do it.* “Nice.”

Wei Ying pouted at him. He did that a lot, and Lan Wangji was beginning to realize that he might be weak to it.

“I look ‘nice’? Lan Zhan, come on, that gives me nothing!”

All too aware of the way his ears were reddening, Lan Wangji looked steadfastly at the wall behind Wei Ying before speaking.

“You look...good.”

“‘Good’ is barely better than ‘nice,’ Lan Zhan,” Wei Ying reprimanded, wagging a finger at him. “Your girlfriend must despair of you.”

Lan Wangji blinked at this incredibly wrong statement.

“I don’t have a girlfriend,” he said robotically. He felt that he was on dangerous ground. Thin ice. A precipice. Et cetera.

Wei Ying’s smile took on a sharp edge, and Lan Wangji fought not to take a step backward.

“What? How can that be?!” Wei Ying took a step toward Lan Wangji, who did his best to anchor his feet to the ground. “Lan Zhan is such a pretty gege, how can he not be taken already?”

The words ‘pretty gege’ were echoing in Lan Wangji’s mind over and over, and frankly if you’d told him that they were to be the words on his tombstone, he would have died happy.

“Gay,” he blurted out, and Wei Ying stared at him.

“What?”

Lan Wangji swallowed. “I’m gay.”

Wei Ying continued to stare at him without understanding. “I don’t know what that means,” he said slowly, and it occurred to Lan Wangji then that ‘gay’ didn’t mean homosexual until around the 1920s.

“I...prefer men.”

After a few moments of silence, Wei Ying’s cheeks turned an alarming shade of pink, and if not for the conversation, he might have thought Wei Ying was becoming ill.

“O-oh!” Wei Ying said, voice much too loud. Despite obviously being thrown by Lan Wangji’s confession, he did not try to move away from him. “That’s—that’s great! So! No... girlfriend, then. Ah...boyfriend?”

Again, Lan Wangji swallowed, and then shook his head.

“Good,” Wei Ying whispered, voice almost hoarse. “Good.”

Lan Wangji very much wanted to ask Wei Ying why it was good, but he’d told his uncle that he and Wei Ying would visit him in the morning. It was morning. And frankly, Lan Wangji wasn’t sure what to do with this conversation anyway.

“My uncle,” he blurted out, finally taking a step back and putting distance between them. “He’s expecting us.”

Wei Ying blinked a few times. “Right. Uncle. Your uncle.”

Lan Wangji took another step back. “We should go.”

Wei Ying nodded slowly in agreement, and Lan Wangji very much did *not* turn and flee the room. He walked calmly away from Wei Ying, reminding himself continuously that the man was technically over 600 years old and had been dead 24 hours ago.

Oh, and also he was apparently a war criminal.

They’d made it out the door before Lan Wangji realized that Wei Ying had not fixed his hair. He ushered the man back inside and forced him to comb out his long hair and tie it up before leaving again, still feeling a little flustered by the whole gay thing.

Up until then, Wei Ying had been flirting with him, but now that he’d come out (no pun intended) and said he preferred men, Wei Ying seemed a little quieter. Was he homophobic? Lan Wangji wasn’t inclined to think so, as he imagined that a homophobic man would downright refuse to share a bed with another man. It was the kind of thing he could imagine a handful of his classmates doing, based on the way they acted in class sometimes.

Still, the fact remained that Wei Ying’s flirting had died down, and Lan Wangji found himself missing it. He wanted to ask the man if anything was wrong, but wasn’t sure how best to say, “Have you stopped flirting with me because now you know there’s a chance I might want to sleep with you?” (Lan Wangji was well aware at this point that the ‘chance’ of him wanting to sleep with Wei Ying was astronomically high, but that was beside the point.) So, he kept his thoughts to himself and instead provided Wei Ying with guided commentary as they made their way through Cloud Recesses to his uncle’s residence. He seemed fascinated by modern technology, and had never ending questions about how things worked. Lan Wangji could

answer most of his questions, but as Wei Ying soaked up more and more information, his questions became more detailed. He might benefit from being introduced to some of the students from the engineering or data science departments, and began to comb through who he knew in his mind.

As they approached Lan Qiren's home, Wei Ying's questions petered off again, and before they could pass through the gate, he stopped in his tracks.

"Lan Zhan," he asked, and Lan Wangji turned to him. There was genuine trepidation in Wei Ying's voice. When he saw that he had Lan Wangji's attention, Wei Ying took a deep breath and said, "Your uncle has a very specific idea of who I was. Who the Yiling Patriarch was. I'm not...I'm not what the stories say I was. But, I *did* do some things that weren't great. I had reasons, and to me they were good reasons, but..."

Lan Wangji thought he understood what Wei Ying was trying to say. "Wei Ying. I will not judge you on who you were six hundred years ago. History is written by the victors, and you...died before you could have a say in what was said about you."

Wei Ying's small white teeth were worrying at his lower lip and before he could process his actions, Lan Wangji extended a hand and grasped the man's chin, pulling it down. The resulting picture—Wei Ying staring at him with surprised eyes and an open mouth—was a little too heady for so early in the morning and Lan Wangji quickly released him.

"So," he went on hurriedly. "No matter what my uncle says about you, know that I will not abandon my trust in you."

Silver eyes blinked at him. "You...trust me? Lan Zhan, you hardly know me."

It took everything in him not to turn away. This was verging into emotional territory and Lan Wangji had never enjoyed such conversations. But Wei Ying seemed fragile in this moment, so Lan Wangji stood his ground and stared back at Wei Ying.

"Yes." They stood in quiet for a few seconds before Lan Wangji cleared his throat and turned, putting his hand on the gate to his uncle's house. "Come. Uncle is waiting."

Lan Wangji led the way up the path to his uncle's door and knocked without checking to see if Wei Ying was still behind him. He assumed the answer would be yes.

When the door opened, revealing his uncle (now respectably clothed in one of his crispest suits), he knew immediately that Wei Ying hadn't run away once he'd turned his back, because Lan Qiren's eyes fixed on a point over Lan Wangji's shoulder and his nostrils flared.

"Wangji. Wei Wuxian. Come in," Lan Qiren said sharply, and strode back into his home.

They followed, this time being shown into his uncle's sitting room. Already seated and sipping tea was Xichen, who looked up when they stepped into the room, offering a smile to Wangji.

“Brother,” he said warmly, standing up and moving forward so he could place a hand on Lan Wangji’s shoulder. “It is good to see you.”

“Xichen,” Lan Wangji replied, nodding in acknowledgement. His brother then turned his gaze onto Wei Ying, who was just behind him. Lan Wangji saw his brother’s eyes take in the familiar shirt on Wei Ying’s torso and tried to keep his face completely still when a raised eyebrow was directed at him.

“And you must be Wei Wuxian,” Xichen said, extending a hand toward Wei Ying. “I am Lan Xichen, Wangji’s brother.”

“Yeah, I gathered that,” said Wei Ying, but he accepted Xichen’s hand and shook it gamely. “Nice to meet you. I’m the Yiling Patriarch.”

“So I’ve heard.” There was a note of amusement in his brother’s voice as they all sat down, Lan Qiren taking the seat closest to the gently crackling fireplace. Xichen was in the only other armchair, which left Lan Wangji and Wei Ying to take the couch. If Wei Ying sat a little closer to Lan Wangji than was normal for anyone, he didn’t comment on it, although Xichen clearly noticed the way Wei Ying’s body was angled toward Lan Wangji. “Tea?”

Wangji hurried to pour the tea before his brother could, doling out first a cup for Wei Ying and then for himself. He also topped up his brother and uncle’s cups, and everyone sat back to sip at the light white tea. He caught Wei Ying’s slight grimace after his first sip, and reached out to take the honey that was always included in his uncle’s tea services, but which always went unused.

“Thanks, Lan Zhan,” Wei Ying murmured, scooping out a large amount of honey and then stirring it (loudly) into his tea.

Lan Xichen made an odd sound in his throat, and Lan Wangji immediately shot him a glare. There was a knowing look on his brother’s face that he didn’t appreciate.

Their uncle cleared his throat pointedly.

“We are here this morning to discuss Wei Wuxian’s arrival,” he said gruffly, and Wei Ying’s spoon clattered against the side of his cup. The Lans ignored him. “Wangji, tell Xichen what happened.”

Lan Wangji recounted the events of yesterday (most of them, anyway; he left out the dick-sketch and the bed-sharing) and by the time he was finished, he needed to pour more tea for everyone. Wei Ying added honey again, which elicited a grimace from Lan Qiren.

“So, you were summoned by your name,” Xichen said musingly. He was staring at Wei Ying very closely. “Did your name not get used much when you were alive?”

Wei Ying shook his head and shifted in his seat, which incidentally brought him closer to Lan Wangji, who did his best not to think about the heat of the man’s leg pressing against his own.

“Not really. My...friends, Wen Qing and Wen Ning, were the only ones who still talked to me at the end.”

“Wen?” Lan Qiren asked sharply, and Wei Ying startled before nodding slowly. “The Chief Cultivator at that time was Wen Ruohan, was he not?”

“Yeah, but they were from a different branch of the Wens,” Wei Ying said. Lan Wangji heard the defensive tone in his voice, and before he could think, he was pressing back into Wei Ying’s leg with his own. The man’s eyes darted to him briefly before returning to the others. “They and the rest of their branch defected from the Qishan Wens, though not everyone accepted that. It was part of why I kept fighting, even when I...well, when I probably shouldn’t have.”

“Shouldn’t have?” Xichen asked in a gentle voice, and Wei Ying swallowed audibly enough for Lan Wangji to hear it click in his throat.

“You guys know what golden cores are?”

Lan Qiren harrumphed. “Magic, supposedly. There hasn’t been talk of golden cores for at least two hundred years.”

“Well, they used to be a thing,” Wei Ying said tiredly. He looked down at his tea cup and seemed surprised that it was nearly empty again. Lan Wangji poured him more, earning himself a small smile that in no way made his heart thump in his chest. “I lost mine, which is why—”

“You lost it?” Lan Xichen interrupted. His eyebrows were raised as he stared at Wei Ying. “I admit, I have not read much about your time, but I have never heard of a person losing their core.”

Wei Ying’s face twisted. “I guess I didn’t...lose it, exactly. I sort of...gave it away.”

Both his uncle and his brother’s eyebrows raised in shock.

“Why?” Xichen asked, staring at Wei Ying in disbelief.

The man shrugged, as though to diminish his next statement. “My adopted brother needed one more than I did. So I had Wen Qing do a transplant.”

“Such a thing was possible?” Lan Qiren asked, and from what Lan Wangji knew of his uncle, he imagined the man was wishing it were Wen Qing and not Wei Ying who had come to the present. He did so love historical medicine.

“Yeah, though it wasn’t exactly easy. Wen Ning had to constantly feed me spiritual energy so I didn’t die during the surgery. It had never been done before, and I guess since you guys haven’t heard of it, it hasn’t been done since I was reckless enough to do it.”

“Not reckless,” Lan Wangji broke in, drawing eyes to him for the first time in a few minutes. He ignored his family and looked at Wei Ying. “Selfless.”

The apples of Wei Ying's cheeks turned pink, and the man took a clumsy sip of tea.

"Anyway, without a golden core, I couldn't practice normal cultivation. Which is why I had to use the demonic kind."

"*Had to?*" Lan Qiren asked doubtfully, and Wei Ying turned a surprisingly fierce gaze onto the older man.

"Had to, Lan-xiangsheng," Wei Ying replied sharply. "It was the only way I could protect the Dafan Wens."

Lan Wangji hoped he wasn't the only one who noticed that Wei Ying had said "protect the Wens" and not "protect myself."

"So, you can think about me however you want," Wei Ying said, looking at Lan Qiren and sitting up perhaps a little straighter. "But I did what I had to do and I don't regret it. Mostly."

There was silence in the small room for a few moments as they all avoided looking at each other. Lan Wangji did this by staring down at where his and Wei Ying's legs were still pressed together. It was impressively distracting.

"Well then," Xichen said at last, breaking the awkwardness. "Uncle, unless you have any objections, I propose we allow Wei Wuxian to remain in Cloud Recesses for the foreseeable future."

Lan Wangji's heart leapt, and he had a sudden, strong desire to stand up and run around. Which was preposterous.

Lan Qiren was staring at Wei Ying hard, as though he thought perhaps he could break open the other man's mind if he looked long enough. Wei Ying, much to Lan Wangji's pride, stared right back.

Eventually, Lan Qiren grunted. "Fine. But I want to read the diary."

Lan Wangji looked questioningly at Wei Ying, who shrugged. He picked up the diary from where it had sat beside him on the couch and handed it over. His uncle took it gingerly between two fingers, as though he was afraid of being polluted by it.

In a sudden rush, Lan Wangji snatched the diary back.

"Wangji!" Lan Qiren gasped as they all stared at him in confusion.

Lan Wangji said nothing as he flipped to the back of the book and found the sketch. He then carefully tore the page, eliciting more gasps from his uncle, and tucked the scrap of paper into his pocket before handing the diary back to his uncle.

"Apologies, uncle," Lan Wangji said mildly.

Xichen gave him a curious look but said nothing, while Lan Qiren rifled through the diary suspiciously.

“If there is nothing else—” Lan Wangji began, rising from the couch, but Xichen raised a hand to halt him.

“Just a little more, Wangji.” Lan Wangji stifled his completely uncalled for annoyance and sat back down. “We have yet to discuss where Wei Wuxian will stay while he is in Cloud Recesses.”

“Can’t I stay with Lan Zhan?” Wei Ying blurted out, and Lan Wangji had the grace to blush for both of them. “I don’t know anything about this world, I’d be lost without him.”

Lan Wangji pressed his lips firmly together and did not look at his brother.

“I...suppose that makes sense,” Xichen said, and really, there was no reason for him to sound so amused.

“Great!” And there was no reason for Wei Ying to sound so happy.

Really, they were all out to get him.

“Perhaps he could be given access to the library as well,” Lan Wangji proposed. “As he said, Wei Ying does not know about this world, and access to the library would enable him to learn.”

He realized his slip when Xichen raised another eyebrow at him, but he ignored it. He ignored his brother’s entire face actually, and would probably have to for the next few days.

“With supervision,” Lan Qiren countered, but Lan Wangji could tell that his grumbling was mostly performative. He seemed much less wary of Wei Ying after their talk today, and Lan Wangji guessed it was the selflessness that Wei Ying had displayed that had turned his uncle around on him.

“That seems fair!” Wei Ying agreed brightly. “I’ll just follow Lan Zhan around the rest of the time.”

“Wangji has classes,” Lan Qiren barked. “He cannot have you constantly bothering him.”

“Wei Ying does not bother me,” Lan Wangji said immediately, and really, he should just be bundled under a rock where he couldn’t make a fool of himself.

“Ah, give me time, Lan Zhan! Back when I was alive before, I could annoy the hair off a donkey, and they’re *really* annoying,” Wei Ying replied with a wide smile. His eyes were brighter already than they had been earlier, and Lan Wangji literally couldn’t imagine ever being annoyed with him.

“We should go,” Lan Wangji said, and he stood up, not waiting for anyone to agree with him that yes, they should go before he made more of a fool of himself.

Wei Ying shot up to stand beside him, still very close. “It was a pleasure to meet you, Lan Xichen,” he said, and he bowed to Lan Wangji’s brother. He then turned to Lan Qiren and said, a little more seriously, “Thank you for giving me a chance, Lan-xiansheng. This one

will do his best not to cause trouble for you.” He then bowed even lower, and the sheer amount of respect oozing out of him was almost overwhelming. Lan Qiren actually looked shocked, and did nothing but nod to Wei Ying as he and Lan Wangji made for the front door.

“Wangji,” Xichen called after him.

“Go ahead,” Lan Wangji said to Wei Ying. “I will be right out.”

Wei Ying grinned at him and stepped out the front door, probably planning to poke around the front garden until Lan Wangji emerged.

Lan Wangji reluctantly met Xichen’s eyes as his brother met him in the hallway.

They stared at each other for a few moments, and then Xichen said, “You like him, don’t you?”

“I don’t know what you’re talking about,” Lan Wangji muttered, staring at his brother’s forehead.

Lan Xichen was clearly trying to hide his smile. “Would you and Wei Wuxian join me for dinner?”

“...yes.”

“Excellent,” Xichen said with a smile. “I’ll see you both at 7. My house.”

Lan Wangji nodded once and then turned to join Wei Ying in the garden, fully intending to ignore each and every overture his brother made about liking Wei Ying.

“Lan Zhan, are you sure about this?”

Lan Wangji was jolted back to the present by Wei Ying’s voice, which floated over the fitting room door.

They were in Caiyi, where Lan Wangji was buying (with perhaps too much satisfaction) Wei Ying new clothes. He couldn’t keep wearing Lan Wangji’s old clothes (even though something in him did really like seeing Wei Ying in his clothes), so they’d come into town in order to shop. Normally, Lan Wangji hated shopping, and made most of his clothing purchases online, but it was...different with Wei Ying. Already, they’d been to two other stores, where Wei Ying had enthusiastically tried on anything and everything that caught his eye. He didn’t seem constrained by the gender divisions in place, and he flitted back and forth between sections, pulling first a turtleneck, then a dress off the rack and bundling it all off to the fitting rooms, where Lan Wangji sat and waited for the fashion show that Wei Ying evidently enjoyed putting on.

“Sure about what, Wei Ying?” he called back in answer. There were four bags at his feet, and he was perfectly happy to add more. However many more would make Wei Ying happy.

“This feels like a lot of stuff,” Wei Ying said, and he sounded a little embarrassed. “Are you sure you’re not being too generous?”

Frankly, Lan Wangji was realizing quickly that with Wei Ying, he couldn’t be generous enough. He wanted to buy him things: clothes, books, electronics, food. Whatever Wei Ying wanted, Lan Wangji wanted to buy for him, and he was more than a little pleased that Wei Ying apparently wanted a lot.

“No,” was all he said, and Wei Ying chuckled behind the door.

“Alright then, but if I hit your limit, you have to say something!”

That would obviously never happen. Lan Wangji was a trust-fund baby, and up till now he’d always been a little ashamed of that fact. Now, he was still a little ashamed, but spending his mounds of money on Wei Ying was smothering that shame quite nicely.

“Mn.”

“Okay, what about this one?”

The fitting room door opened and Wei Ying stepped out in—

Lan Wangji almost choked on his own spit.

He had *not* seen Wei Ying grab this one.

He was wearing [a sleeveless red dress](#). It had a deep vee cut, putting *so much* of his chest on display. Lan Wangji could see the edges of the sun-shaped scar poking out beneath the straps of the dress, which clung to his waist in a way that was surely not supposed to be possible on the average male body. It fell in soft folds to below his knees, and when Wei Ying spun around it flared out until he stopped, when it wrapped around his legs with the lingering momentum.

“Hng.”

Wei Ying cocked his head, his long ponytail draping over his shoulder, looking like an ink spill on the deep red of the dress.

“What?” he asked innocently.

Surely he wasn’t so innocent that he didn’t realize how he looked. He looked...he looked...

It was taking everything in Lan Wangji to not shove Wei Ying into the fitting room and do things he was very much not supposed to do in a fitting room.

He cleared his throat. Opened his mouth, and then cleared his throat again.

“Good,” he finally said, and Wei Ying grinned.

“Cool, I’ll get it then.”

Lan Wangji wondered if he should talk to Wei Ying about gender norms, or conventions, before deciding that if anyone so much as blinked at Wei Ying in a dress, he would pummel them into the ground.

“What else do I need?” Wei Ying asked as he retreated into the fitting room. Lan Wangji breathed a little easier once the dress was out of his sight. He watched Wei Ying’s feet under the door, had a vision of him in tall dark heels, and almost blacked out. “Lan Zhan?”

“Shoes,” he croaked. “Wei Ying needs shoes.”

They moved on to the shoe store, where Wei Ying revealed his evil plot to kill Lan Wangji with sexyness. He slid his feet into sneakers, then heels, then unisex slip ons, then a pair of heeled boots that made Lan Wangji genuinely want to lie down for a moment.

He’d previously had no idea that clothes could have such a profound effect on him. After surreptitiously eyeing some of the other men who were trying on clothes, he guessed that it was because it was *Wei Ying* who was wearing the clothes. None of the other men could hold his attention, and his eyes kept sliding back to where Wei Ying was trying on a hat, or a jacket, or a fucking scarf.

Lan Wangji wanted to be that scarf.

When they passed an over-priced lingerie store and Wei Ying’s tread slowed noticeably, Lan Wangji decided that it was here that he had to draw the line.

“Here,” he said, getting out his credit card and passing it to Wei Ying. “You remember how I used this?”

Wei Ying took it and squinted at it. He’d definitely been confused about credit cards, even after Lan Wangji had explained them. “Yeah? Just hold it against the little black thing with the glowing words?”

“Right,” Lan Wangji nodded. “I am going to get refreshments. If I am not back before you are finished, wait on that bench.” He indicated said bench, and Wei Ying frowned.

“You’re going in with me?” he asked, looking far too pouty for Lan Wangji’s sanity. “How will I know what to get?”

“Get...get whatever you like,” Lan Wangji said, trying very hard not to think about what Wei Ying might like. His mind was a blur of black and red and straps and lace and if he didn’t walk away very quickly he might expire on the spot.

“Fine,” Wei Ying sighed, sounding very put upon. He patted Lan Wangji on the arm. “I guess I’ll just have to surprise you.”

“Hng.”

“What was that?”

“I’ll be back,” Lan Wangji said, and then he definitely didn’t turn tail and flee to the nearest Barstucks.

By the time he’d gone through the line, gotten himself a hot tea and a croissant, and Wei Ying a cold chocolate monstrosity and cake, and returned to the front of the lingerie store, he thought for sure Wei Ying would have finished. But Wei Ying was not waiting for him on the bench. He settled in to wait for him, bags on his arms and drinks in his hands, and he managed to wait five minutes before worry for Wei Ying—alone in a strange place—overcame him and he strode into the lingerie store, doing his damndest not to look at the display items as he glanced around for Wei Ying.

He heard him before he saw him, and the plaintive sound in his voice made him hurry his steps until he spotted Wei Ying at the checkout counter. There were two people standing at the register, looking at him with suspicious eyes, and Lan Wangji stepped right up behind him.

Wei Ying, somehow, realized he was there, and turned on him with wild, scared eyes.

“Lan Zhan!” he cried, and the relief in his voice washed over Lan Wangji like a warm bath. “These ladies are saying I stole your money rectangle!”

“It’s a *credit card*,” said one of the women, and Lan Wangji spotted a small pin on her shirt that said “manager.” “And it’s really suspicious that you don’t know that.”

“Ma’ams,” Lan Wangji said, trying to be respectful. His eyes accidentally landed on the pile of lace and ruffles and straps on the counter between them and the employees, and he felt his ears flush. “This man is with me. That is my card. I gave it to him while I went for drinks.” He held up the two drinks as proof and saw Wei Ying’s eyes light up. “Please process the purchase and we will be on our way.”

The manager gave him a searching look, and he stared back with his most blank face, the one that always managed to make people back up or give in.

Five minutes later, they had checked out and were leaving the store, another bag draped over Lan Wangji’s arm.

“I can’t wait to show you what I got!” Wei Ying said excitedly as he sipped the chocolate drink. His eyes widened in delight as it hit his tongue and he began to eagerly suck it down, throat working obscenely. “This is great, Lan Zhan!”

“I am glad you like it.” He turned a few thoughts over in his mind before he said, “I think it would be best to explain something.”

He gestured toward the side of the walkway, indicating that they should get out of the way of other shoppers, and Wei Ying followed his directions, sipping his drink curiously.

“What is it, Lan Zhan?”

Lan Wangji took a deep breath. “The...items you just bought. They are typically not shown to others.”

Wei Ying cocked his head in confusion. “Why not? I want you to see them. They’re nice.” His eyes lit up in a way that did not bode well for Lan Wangji. “There’s one that’s mostly black, but then it’s got this, like, sheer part where—”

“Wei Ying!” Lan Wangji heard the sharpness in his voice right before Wei Ying flinched. He closed his eyes and breathed. “I apologize for that. I am not angry.”

Wei Ying looked at him warily, silver eyes searching his face. “Okay...”

“But...most everything in that store is intended to be seen by the wearer, and the wearer’s... partner.”

“Partner?” Wei Ying asked, momentarily lost before his eyes widened. “As in, cultivation partner?”

It was Lan Wangji’s turn to be lost. “I don’t know what that is.”

Wei Ying swallowed. “It’s like...it’s a person that you, um, dual cultivate with. For life.”

Lan Wangji still didn’t quite understand, but he thought he had the gist of what Wei Ying was saying.

“Then yes. Like a cultivation partner. What you bought is the equivalent of under robes.” Sort of. Except not really at all, because under robes covered a person’s body whereas the lingerie that Wei Ying picked out covered very, very little.

“And you—”

Wei Ying cut himself off, and Lan Wangji sensed that they were on the edge of something. More precisely, on the edge of talking about whatever was between them, which would either make things easier or harder.

Lan Wangji set down the bags he was carrying and reached into his pocket, pulling out the scrap of paper that he’d torn out of Wei Ying’s diary that morning. He held it out to Wei Ying silently and watched as the man took it from him delicately.

“Is this...” Wei Ying stared at it, a very small smile on his face. He looked up at Lan Wangji with glittering eyes. “Lan Zhan. Were you carrying my dick around in your pocket this whole time?”

“Maybe.” Yes. Obviously.

Wei Ying glanced at the sketch and then back up at Lan Wangji, eyes narrowing in thought. “Do you,” he said, licking his lips and immediately snagging Lan Wangji’s attention to them. “Do you want to hold the real thing?”

An irrepressible laugh bubbled up in Lan Wangji's chest and it came out in a soft chuckle that made Wei Ying's face break into a massive smile. It was so wide Lan Wangji was surprised his cheeks didn't split.

"That is the worst line I've ever heard," Lan Wangji told him, but his lips were curving into a smile. Wei Ying was practically glowing.

"Is that a no?" the man asked, bouncing on the balls of his feet, and Lan Wangji reached out and tucked a strand of hair behind the man's ear, like he'd wanted to do since yesterday. Yesterday? How had he only known Wei Ying for less than twenty-four hours and he was already this...this...

"It is not a no," Lan Wangji admitted, and Wei Ying responded by launching himself at Lan Wangji, who felt tea splash out of his cup and onto his hand, but he was too busy burying his nose into Wei Ying's hair to give a shit.

He could feel Wei Ying pressing his nose into the crook of his neck, his hands joining behind Lan Wangji's back and holding him tightly. He could *also* feel the model for the sketch pressing into him in a way that made his blood rush around his brain.

"Home?" he whispered in Wei Ying's hair, and the man squeezed him before pulling back.

"*Please*."

Chapter End Notes

Next chapter is entirely smut, you can skip straight to chapter 3 if you want!

Chapter 2

Chapter Notes

This is almost 4K words of just smut. The smuttiest smut I've ever written.

By the time he and Wei Ying stumbled through the door of his home, Lan Wangji was ready to burst out of his skin. Wei Ying had been *looking* at him the entire way back to Cloud Recesses, and Lan Wangji thought such a thing shouldn't be allowed in public. He was very, *very* glad that it was the weekend, as he had no work to do and could devote all of his time to *this* :

His hands on Wei Ying's warm skin. Fingers tangling in his hair, pulling the tie out so that it tumbled down his back like silk. Tracing over each of his ribs until his hands found the man's hips and he could drag him closer, closer. The way Wei Ying's legs parted and pulled him in, holding him down while his arms clung to Lan Wangji's neck in a way that screamed *stay stay stay* .

As if Lan Wangji would ever want to be anywhere else.

He nearly ripped his own shirt as he pulled it off of Wei Ying, whose groan indicated that he liked that very much. So when it came time to yank Wei Ying's pants off, he didn't hold back, and they both heard the *riiip* that came from the seat of the pants, and in an instant, Wei Ying was pulling him down hard, latching their lips together like he needed it to live. Which was about how Lan Wangji himself felt, so that was alright.

Wei Ying's mouth was Lan Wangji's new favorite place, thank you very much. He swept his tongue past the man's lips, which was met with a moan that sent shivers down Lan Wangji's spine. His spine that still had a shirt over it, which was silly when he could be *not* wearing a shirt and press his chest against Wei Ying's.

He pulled back and tore his shirt off, tossing it haphazardly in the direction of his hamper. His hamper? Oh, they were in his room already. When had that happened? He decided it didn't matter when Wei Ying pinched his nipples between thumb and forefinger, and his breath hissed out as he dove back into Wei Ying's mouth, sweeping it with his tongue and biting the man's lips until they were red with it.

"Hey, Lan Zhan," Wei Ying gasped when they reached the bed. They stood over it, hands still lost on each other, mouths a centimeter apart. "Have you done anything before?"

His brows furrowed for a moment before he guessed Wei Ying's meaning, and he blushed. "Just a little." Probably less than Wei Ying, going off of some of the comments he'd written into his diary.

“Well, that’s more than me,” Wei Ying admitted and then he spun them around and shoved Lan Wangji onto the bed. He climbed on top of Lan Wangji and began attacking his neck, which Lan Wangji found he had zero objections to.

“H-how is that p-possible?” Lan Wangji asked, stumbling over his words as Wei Ying found exciting new spots on his neck that he’d been previously unaware of.

“What?” Wei Ying sounded distracted, and then he bit Lan Wangji’s collarbone, thus explaining his distraction.

Lan Wangji fought to keep his ass anchored to the bed. It was difficult, as Wei Ying had his knees on either side of Lan Wangji’s hips, the briefs he’d borrowed from Lan Wangji tight across the front, which was *so close* to where Lan Wangji’s blood had decided to have a party in his pants.

“You said—implied—that you haven’t d-done much.” A snippy corner of Lan Wangji’s brain was insisting they have this conversation right now, which he only partially agreed with.

“Mm,” Wei Ying hummed, tongue stroking around his nipple before he tugged on it with his teeth. Lan Wangji felt dizzy as more blood joined the party. “I’ve kissed exactly one person.” *Nibble* . “When I was six.”

Wei Ying was—he was untouched. Which really didn’t mean anything in the grand scheme of things, because it didn’t matter at all whether someone was ever “touched,” but an animal side of him that he’d never seen before was howling with pleasure and the very strong desire to touch, to take, to claim.

“But you’re so—” *Nibble* . He gasped. “—beautiful.”

Wei Ying’s teeth left his chest as he sat up to look at Lan Wangji. Unfortunately, he really did sit, which brought his ass directly onto the part of Lan Wangji that was screaming for it.

Lan Wangji groaned and his hands found Wei Ying’s hips automatically, pulling him down as he ground upward. Wei Ying rolled, his movement fluid and Lan Wangji felt horribly close to coming. Horrible, because it was *way too fucking soon for that* .

“You think I’m beautiful?” Wei Ying asked, and it was the vulnerability in his voice that pulled Lan Wangji out of his place of lust.

He blinked a little vacantly before his eyes focused on Wei Ying’s face. He reached out a hand and cupped the man’s soft cheek, stroking his thumb across his cheekbone.

“Yes,” he said, imbuing all the seriousness he felt into his voice. “Watching you today was... difficult.”

“Really?” Wei Ying sounded pleased.

“Mn. The red dress in particular.”

A speculative light came into Wei Ying’s eyes.

“Is that so?” Wei Ying made another rolling movement with his hips, sending Lan Wangji’s eyelids fluttering shut. He then bent at the waist until his lips were next to Lan Wangji’s ear and he whispered, “Does Lan-er-gege want to rip my pretty red dress off me?”

Lan Wangji heard a weird stifled scream from somewhere, blinked, and then he was on top of Wei Ying, shoving his hands over his head and down onto the mattress.

“Stay,” he said, in such a dark voice that he nearly didn’t recognize himself.

“Nghh,” Wei Ying replied.

Lan Wangji scrambled down, fully ripped the borrowed briefs off of Wei Ying, and before either of them could gasp he had Wei Ying’s cock buried in his throat.

Wei Ying screamed as he came, and a vicious part of Lan Wangji reveled in it. He kept his mouth on Wei Ying, tongue laving his cock even as it partially softened. He had absolutely zero intention of letting it out of his mouth until it was hard again, not letting up even when Wei Ying started to whimper.

“Zhan-ge, please,” Wei Ying mumbled, his thighs trembling against Lan Wangji, who didn’t stop sucking. When he let his fingers trail over and down Wei Ying’s thighs, the man shuddered, but he said nothing as Lan Wangji’s fingers came to a stop beneath his balls.

He slowly drew off Wei Ying’s cock, keeping his lips in a tight wet circle as he did so. When the tip popped out, Wei Ying moaned and Lan Wangji finally looked up. Wei Ying’s face was sweaty and flushed, his hair wild around him on the pillow. His hands were exactly where Lan Wangji had left them.

“Good boy,” he whispered, the breath of his words (which he hadn’t exactly meant to say out loud) ghosting over Wei Ying’s damp cock. To his surprise and delight, Wei Ying shuddered again, either because of his words or his breath, he wasn’t entirely sure. He’d have to find out. “Now,” he said, and waited until Wei Ying had met his eyes, the silver looking a little glassy. Lan Wangji carefully moved his finger towards Wei Ying’s hole, feeling the muscles clench automatically. “May I fuck you?”

Wei Ying’s head fell back against the pillows, but his cock twitched, already showing signs of returning to hardness. “Surely only you could sound so polite while asking something so devastating, Lan Zhan.”

Lan Wangji did not move his finger. “Wei Ying.” The man’s breathing was shallow, as though he still hadn’t recovered. “A’Ying,” he said, letting a trickle of sharpness into his voice.

Wei Ying’s head snapped up so fast that he was briefly worried for the man’s neck.

“I asked you a question,” Lan Wangji reminded him, leaning closer so that his warm breath fell across the man’s cock again.

“May you...fuck me?” Wei Ying asked, sounding a little out of it.

“Mn.”

“I...I haven't. Before.”

“Ever? With anything?”

Wei Ying shook his head, and Lan Wangji had to close his eyes against the sudden rush of desire that coursed through him. When he opened them again, Wei Ying was still staring at him.

“We do not have to, if you do not want to,” Lan Wangji said softly, and he carefully started to withdraw his hand, fully prepared to just suck Wei Ying off until the sun went down and then came up again.

But Wei Ying's thighs tightened, trapping his hand in place. When Lan Wangji searched Wei Ying's face, he found trepidation there, but also a want so naked it put Wei Ying to shame.

“Yes,” he said, voice shaky, but it firmed up as he went on, “Yes, Lan-er-gege. Fuck me.”

Well then.

Lan Wangji climbed off the bed and quickly pulled off his pants and briefs, his cock springing free and prompting Wei Ying to moan at the sight of it. True, Lan Wangji was larger than average, but no one had ever moaned over it. He pulled open his bedside drawer and drew out the lube and condoms he kept there, usually only used by himself, and then returned to his place between Wei Ying's legs.

“I will be careful,” Lan Wangji promised and Wei Ying's breath hitched.

“You don't have to be,” he whispered, and honestly, was he trying to kill Lan Wangji? Truly? Because it sure as shit seemed like it.

“Just relax,” Lan Wangji said, rather than say anything in response to Wei Ying's unstated invitation to ruin him. He knelt over Wei Ying's right leg, breath freezing for a moment when his balls came to rest on his bare skin. He pulled out a condom and did his best to put it on his finger. It was entirely too large, but he wanted to be careful about this. He gripped the ends of it with his other fingers and his thumb before squeezing some lube onto his awkwardly-gloved finger.

Gloves. He should invest in gloves.

With his left hand, he took hold of Wei Ying's cock once more, rubbing the coarse pad of his thumb over the sensitive skin below the head. Wei Ying's breath hissed out between his teeth at the sensation and he shut his eyes tightly. Lan Wangji continued to stroke Wei Ying with one hand while his right hand came between his thighs, gently pushing them apart for better access. Wei Ying complied, spreading his legs a little wider than necessary, but it would do. Judging that the lube was probably just warm enough, he carefully placed the tip of his finger against Wei Ying's entrance, feeling it tighten in response.

“Relax, Wei Ying,” he said soothingly, and Wei Ying opened his eyes.

“Can I touch you?” Wei Ying murmured, his hands flexing over his head, and Lan Wangji nodded. A little shakily, Wei Ying brought his hands down to rest on Lan Wangji’s knees, his slender fingers tightening.

Lan Wangji watched Wei Ying breathe as he gradually relaxed, and the moment he felt that tight ring of muscle loosen the smallest amount, he began to push forward.

Wei Ying immediately tightened up again, and Lan Wangji spent a few moments stroking him, murmuring how beautiful he was and how good he was being. It seemed to do the trick, and when Wei Ying relaxed again, Lan Wangji continued to push, dragging his finger slowly against the muscle that was made to keep things in, or, in this case, out.

Wei Ying still seemed tense, so Lan Wangji shuffled backward until he could bend down just enough to take the tip of Wei Ying’s cock into his mouth. This made the other man moan and his hips bucked up, simultaneously shoving his dick into Lan Wangji’s throat and Lan Wangji’s finger further into his ass. Wei Ying gasped, as though he hadn’t expected that to happen, but before he could tense up, Lan Wangji was doing his best to suck Wei Ying off, and hard. It was distracting enough that Lan Wangji managed to get his finger in to the second knuckle before pulling it out and slowly sliding it back in.

“Feels...weird...” Wei Ying huffed, but his hips were still chasing Lan Wangji’s mouth.

Lan Wangji stilled his finger in question and waited to see if Wei Ying would ask him to stop, but after a few seconds of this stillness, Wei Ying looked down at him.

“Why’d you stop?”

Lan Wangji merely swallowed around Wei Ying’s cock and went back to fingering him.

It got easier and easier until finally Wei Ying was clearly trying to fuck himself both into Lan Wangji’s mouth and onto his finger. Lan Wangji withdrew his hand, to Wei Ying’s immediate pouting, and put another finger into the awkward condom-glove. When he pressed against Wei Ying’s entrance again, this time with two fingers, Wei Ying’s breath hissed even as he relaxed enough to let Lan Wangji back in.

Lan Wangji pulled off of Wei Ying’s cock and settled on his knees, his left hand propping him up while his right squelched in and out of Wei Ying’s hole.

“Lan Zhan,” Wei Ying panted, hips moving as he tried to chase the fingers that were teasing him open.

“Wei Ying,” he replied calmly, even as his fingers sought out the spot that would (hopefully) set Wei Ying on fire.

“Aren’t you going to-to fuck me?”

“Is this not fucking?” he asked, feigning innocence, and Wei Ying groaned right before Lan Wangji felt his fingers brush against that very particular bundle of nerves that always managed to set him alight.

Immediately, Wei Ying's back arched off the bed as he shouted, and Lan Wangji began to fuck him earnestly with his fingers. He'd been doing his best to be slow before, not wanting to overwhelm Wei Ying too much before he even got his cock in him, but that mercy was now over. He grazed Wei Ying's prostate over and over until the man was whining beneath him, knuckles white where they were gripping his knees.

"Okay, okay, Lan Zhan, Lan-er-gege, I get it, I get it, you weren't fucking me yet, but please please fuck me now, *please* —"

With one swift movement, Lan Wangji pulled his fingers out of Wei Ying, making the man grunt with the sensation. He pulled the condom off his fingers and used both hands to roll Wei Ying onto his stomach.

"It'll be easier this way," Lan Wangji whispered as he bent down to press a kiss between the man's shoulder blades. "For the first time."

"Okay," Wei Ying said hoarsely.

Lan Wangji retrieved the condoms and rolled one onto his cock as quickly as he could, pinching the tip carefully. He got a palmful of lube and stroked himself with his right hand as he used his left to pull Wei Ying's hips up, using his knees to knock the other man's apart.

"You will tell me if it hurts," Lan Wangji said, not quite an ask, not quite an order, and Wei Ying nodded even as he pushed his ass back toward him.

"Yeah, yeah, tell you if it hurts," Wei Ying repeated breathlessly. For someone who had never done this before, he was impressively thirsty for it, which Lan Wangji found alarmingly hot.

He lined himself up, feeling his face flush as he stared down at Wei Ying's hole before letting his gaze trace over the scars on his back. Most of them were silver, like someone had wanted the scars to stay for a long time, if not forever. Lan Wangji wished he could go back in time, find the person who'd done this, and make them feel the same pain Wei Ying must have felt.

But those were feelings for another time. Right now, he had a time-traveling demonic cultivator to wreck.

He slowly pushed his hips forward and Wei Ying groaned. Even with just the tip inside the man, Lan Wangji felt like he was plunging into fire. How was he *this fucking hot*? It didn't seem real, but it wasn't going to stop him from pushing more of himself into Wei Ying. Which he proceeded to do with increasing force, until *finally* his pelvis was flush against Wei Ying's ass. Wei Ying who was whining in the back of his throat with each tiny movement that Lan Wangji made.

Being inside of Wei Ying was...hard to describe. All at once, Lan Wangji felt more aroused than he'd ever felt in his life, his head felt dizzy with lust, he was being consumed by the need to *fuck*, and yet his heart (despite pounding in his chest) felt full. Of warmth, of care, of...of...

Lan Wangji carefully drew his cock out of Wei Ying, leaving only the tip inside, and he waited.

“Lan Zhan,” Wei Ying panted, trying to cant his hips back on to Lan Wangji. “Wh-what are you—”

With sudden force, Lan Wangji slammed back into Wei Ying, driving his cock as deeply as possible into the other man and luxuriating in the heat and resulting cry.

“Fuck, Lan Zhan, *fuck* —” Wei Ying was saying, but Lan Wangji was ready to make Wei Ying incoherent, so he didn’t wait for more words before he pulled out and fucked back in again, repeating the motion again, and again, and again, all the while watching himself disappear inside Wei Ying, who was burying his face in the sheets as he moaned.

Lan Wangji reached out and laid a hand on the back of Wei Ying’s head, gently turning his face to the side so he could see the man’s beautiful profile.

“I want to hear you clearly,” Lan Wangji said softly, before fucking into him *hard* .

Lan Wangji heard him quite clearly after that.

He might have lost consciousness for a while, consumed as he was by the act of fucking Wei Ying. And this was only their first time, he thought vaguely as he used both hands to pull Wei Ying onto his cock as he thrust in, drawing out a plaintive cry from the man. He couldn’t imagine how much better it would get once they’d done this a few times, ten times, fifty times, *as many times as they could for the rest of their lives* .

The thought rolled through him like thunder, and he felt it in his bones. He came back to himself, eyes locking onto Wei Ying’s face. The eye that Lan Wangji could see was wide open, staring glassily at the wall as his mouth hung open, sounds forced out of his throat by the force of Lan Wangji’s thrusts.

“A’Ying?” he asked, slowing briefly to a grind as he checked on Wei Ying.

“Gege,” Wei Ying whispered, and his iris angled back and up towards him. “I want...I want...”

“You want to come?” Lan Wangji asked gently and felt a small frisson of alarm when tears filled Wei Ying’s visible eye, but then the man was nodding earnestly.

“Y-yes, p-please, make me come, I want it, need it, need *you* —”

Lan Wangji was happy to oblige.

He resumed his furious pace of fucking into Wei Ying and reached down to take the man’s cock in his hand. Wei Ying gasped and it took only a few strokes before Wei Ying was coming between his fingers, his entire body shaking with it, ass tightening around Lan Wangji so deliciously that he tumbled over the edge with little warning. He thrust a few more times before he stilled inside of Wei Ying, feeling the condom fill with his spunk, and he hoped, abruptly and fiercely, that someday they did this without the condom.

At last, he felt post-orgasmic exhaustion settle onto his body like a weight. He rolled himself and Wei Ying to the side as he cuddled the other man against his chest. His softening cock slipped out of Wei Ying slowly, and then they simply lay there for several long minutes, breathing hard as they came down from sex.

“A’Ying?” Lan Wangji said, using a soft hand to brush the dark hair in front of him down against the man’s head.

“Mm?” Wei Ying sounded incredibly tired, like he was more worn out than he’d ever been in his life. Lan Wangji tried not to feel too smug about that.

“How do you feel?”

He felt Wei Ying’s chest expand against him as he breathed deeply, and then let it out in a heavy sigh.

“Perfect, gege,” he said at last. “I feel perfect.”

Chapter 3

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Later, after Lan Wangji had cleaned them both up, he drew a bath and carefully poured a limp Wei Ying into it. He changed the sheets as quickly as possible, as he was mildly worried that a boneless Wei Ying would slip under the water, but when he made it back to the bathroom, Wei Ying was awake and tracing lazy circles in the surface of the water.

When he saw Lan Wangji standing in the doorway, he smiled.

“Lan Zhan,” he greeted, laying his head against the shower wall. “You fucked me so good.”

Now that they were not having sex, Lan Wangji felt a flush crawl up his neck.

“Mmn,” was his only answer. “Do you want pajamas?”

Wei Ying nodded and Lan Wangji hurried out to collect them for him. When he returned, Wei Ying looked a little...cautious.

“Um, Lan Zhan,” he said, and Lan Wangji stood there, clothes in his hands, wearing nothing but briefs, and waited for Wei Ying to go on. “Does this mean...I mean, do you want...” He chewed on his lip again, and Lan Wangji thought it might be best if he never did that in public. “Doyouwanttobecultivationpartners?”

Lan Wangji blinked as he processed what Wei Ying had said.

“I am...not a cultivator,” he pointed out carefully, and Wei Ying gave a wry smile.

“Neither am I,” Wei Ying reminded him. “Do you want to be regular partners? That’s what you call them now, right?”

Partner. Boyfriend. Husband.

“That is one option, yes.”

“Soooo...?” Wei Ying trailed off and stared at him intently, clearly waiting for a response.

Never one for words, Lan Wangji walked to the tub, reached down, and pulled Wei Ying up by the elbows. He brought their faces close together until he could see his own reflection in Wei Ying’s eyes.

“Yes.”

And then he kissed him.

At 6:30, Lan Wangji remembered that he and Wei Ying were supposed to meet Xichen at his house for dinner. They scrambled to make themselves presentable, Wei Ying donning a set of his new clothes: tight black pants, a loose red tunic shirt, and a pair of black heeled boots. He looked so good that Lan Wangji almost wanted to cancel their dinner plans, but Wei Ying only laughed and dragged him out the door, promising that they could fuck after they ate.

When they reached Xichen's house and Lan Wangji knocked on the door, his brother opened it, took one look at them, and burst into laughter.

Lan Wangji narrowed his eyes at his brother as he waited for him to calm down, but Xichen merely waved them inside and kept laughing.

"What is so funny, brother?" he asked through gritted teeth as he led the way to the kitchen. He helped Wei Ying onto one of the counter stools (unnecessary, true, as Wei Ying was more than capable of sitting down, but he felt it appropriate to be careful of the man's ass, given the pounding it had just received) and turned to glare at Xichen, who was trying to contain himself.

"You two waste no time, I see," Xichen said with a smile, and Lan Wangji stared at his truly horrible brother.

"What."

Xichen pointed at Lan Wangji, who turned to look at Wei Ying with outright confusion. Wei Ying's eyes widened and he put a hand to his mouth.

"Oh shit, Lan Zhan," said Wei Ying. He stretched out his fingers and ran them over the skin of Lan Wangji's neck. "I forgot about..."

Ah.

Lan Wangji briefly considered grabbing Wei Ying and fleeing the city, before deciding that he should at least finish his degree first.

"Brother..." he began, but didn't know what he wanted to say.

"I'm sorry, Wangji, I'm sorry," Xichen said, patting him on the shoulder. "I am glad that you two are...getting along."

"We're partners!" Wei Ying declared proudly, and Lan Wangji only slightly wanted to hide his face as Lan Xichen stared at him with a raised eyebrow.

"Is that so?"

"Yes," Lan Wangji said stiffly, but then Wei Ying put a hand on his thigh, and he felt some of his anxiety melt away. "Yes," he said again, a little softer. "We are...partners."

"Just not cultivation partners, because that's not a thing anymore."

“Quite,” agreed Xichen. He then clapped his hands together and said, “So. Are we ready for dinner?”

The next few days were pretty excellent. Wei Ying stuck to him like a burr, which he found he quite liked. Many people seemed confused by the sudden appearance of a strange man who followed Lan Wangji around (and sat by him! And talked to him! And one person *swore* they saw Lan Wangji touch the stranger’s *ass*) (he did; Lan Wangji, it turned out, was very horny for Wei Ying pretty much all the time). Wei Ying went to class with him, and afterward they went to the library, where Lan Wangji did research and Wei Ying read anything that jumped out to him. He recited random facts as the days went by, random things he’d learned while reading. He was, as it turned out, incredibly smart, and more than once his fact-reciting led to impromptu makeouts in places that were probably not meant for making out.

All in all, Lan Wangji was feeling happier than ever when one day, he and Wei Ying were sitting in the library. He was sitting normally, the way most people sat in chairs, and Wei Ying was beside him sitting backwards on the chair, leaning his elbows on the table as he read a tract about Yiling from the archives. It was definitely not an easy way to sit, as Wei Ying had decided that day to wear the red dress that had nearly made Lan Wangji lose his reserve in public. It was gathered up around his thighs, and any time Lan Wangji caught someone looking, he stared daggers at them until they looked away hurriedly. There was a thump as someone dropped a book on the table across from Lan Wangji, who looked up (while Wei Ying tilted his head back and looked at the person upside down) and saw Su She.

He sighed internally.

“Lan Wangji, it’s been a while!”

It had been maybe a week.

“Mn.”

Wei Ying turned his head to look at Lan Wangji. “Who’s this?”

“Su She. Su She, this is Wei Wuxian. He recently arrived in Cloud Recesses.”

They’d decided, together with Lan Qiren and Xichen, to not tell anyone that Wei Ying was a time-traveling demonic cultivator who had once been responsible for the deaths of thousands. It seemed much easier to simply say “he just got here.”

“Oh?” Su She looked down his nose at Wei Ying, who stared blankly at him, his hair spilling across the table. “And what does Wei Wuxian study?”

“Wei Wuxian studies Lan Wangji,” said Wei Ying perkily, and Lan Wangji felt simultaneously embarrassed and turned on by his partner.

Su She turned an interesting color of green. “Excuse me?” he spluttered, and Lan Wangji responded by reaching out to put a hand on Wei Ying’s shoulder.

“I said,” Wei Ying said slowly, as though Su She were a particularly small child. “Wei Wuxian, that’s me, studies Lan Wangji, that’s him.” He pointed first to himself and then to Lan Zhan, who, before he could stop himself, leaned over and gently bit the man’s finger. “Lan *Zhan!*” Wei Ying gasped dramatically and Lan Wangji released his finger, feeling rather smug.

“Are you fucking kidding me?” Su She demanded loudly, drawing attention from other students who were studying nearby. “I’ve been hitting on you for the past three semesters and I’ve gotten *nothing*, but this skinny piece of weird in a dress rolls in and a week later you’re fucking?!”

“Actually, we were fucking on day two,” Wei Ying corrects helpfully, and Su She blanches.

“Please leave,” Lan Wangji asks politely. It’s interesting: before, he’d been immensely annoyed by Su She’s mere presence, but with Wei Ying at his side, he couldn’t care less what Su She did or where he went.

Still spluttering in confusion, Su She snatched up his books and stormed away, to the scattered applause of other students. He really wasn’t very popular.

“Well, he’s awful,” Wei Ying observed lightly, turning around in his chair so that he was facing Lan Wangji, rearranging his dress so that it demurely covered his knees. “Has he really been hitting on you?”

Lan Wangji shrugged. “Not very well.”

“Ah, Lan Zhan, is there anyone out there whose flirting you *have* enjoyed?”

“Wei Ying’s,” he responded at once, and Wei Ying blushed, lightly slapping Lan Wangji’s arm even though he looked rather pleased.

“Anyway.” Wei Ying leaned in close to Lan Wangji, until his lips brushed the man’s jaw when he spoke. “All that talk of fucking got me thinking...”

Immediately, Lan Wangji shut his book and began shoving his things into his bag. There were few things he would rush for, but sex with Wei Ying would always be one of them.

“Lan-er-gege, you didn’t let me finish!” Wei Ying complained, but he was laughing.

Already packed up, Lan Wangji turned (a little impatiently) to face Wei Ying, who stood up and put his arms around Lan Wangji’s neck, lips to his ear once again.

“I was *going* to suggest that we circle back to an idea that came up during our first time,” Wei Ying said softly and Lan Wangji pulled back to look at him in confusion. Wei Ying looked down slowly to where his dress was swaying gently around Lan Wangji’s legs, and then back up at his face with a terrible smile. Well, terrible for his composure; it was actually a *very* good smile. With an arched brow and a smirk, Wei Ying purred, “Does Lan-er-gege want to rip my pretty red dress off me?”

Five minutes later, from the comfort of the bed that they shared every night, Lan Wangji was doing exactly that, much to their mutual pleasure

Chapter End Notes

Thank you for reading!! I hope you enjoyed this fic 🥰💜

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